The Ties that Bind

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/51115435.

Rating:
Mature

Archive Warning:
Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Category:
F/M

Fandom:
Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling

Relationships:
Lucius Malfoy/Narcissa Black Malfoy, Draco Malfoy & Harry Potter

Characters:
Narcissa Black Malfoy, Lucius Malfoy, Harry Potter, Draco Malfoy, Rubeus Hagrid, Other Character Tags to Be Added, Garrick Ollivander, Albus Dumbledore, Sirius Black

Additional Tags:
Not Canon Compliant, Good Parent Narcissa Black Malfoy, BAMF Narcissa Black Malfoy, Loving Marriage, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Past Child Abuse, Child Neglect, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD, Childhood Trauma, Custody Battle, Narcissa Black Malfoy-centric, Family Issues, Soul Bond, Maternal Instinct, Book 1: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, Morally Grey Lucius Malfoy, Manipulative Albus Dumbledore, Protective Slytherins, Abusive Dursley Family (Harry Potter), Malfoy Family-centric (Harry Potter), Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Harry Potter is a Malfoy, Good Malfoy Family (Harry Potter), Good Parent Lucius Malfoy

Language:
English

Stats:
Published: 2023-10-25 Updated: 2023-11-16 Words: 13,214
Chapters: 6/?

The Ties that Bind

by elvira95

Summary

When Harry Potter meets Draco Malfoy in Madam Malkins' robe shop Draco is not alone, and Narcissa Malfoy cannot look the other way when every instinct she has is screaming at her to do something. To protect this child. But what right does she have to do such a thing? And even for The Lady Malfoy, Albus Dumbledore is a formidable foe.

While this story will take place over the course of Harry Potter's first year at Hogwarts, that portion of the story is largely the background material. The focus will be on Narcissa and Lucius, and how they navigate the path they have found themselves hurtling down.

Instinct

Madam Malkin had said that it would be a moment longer to fit Draco for new formal robes and Narcissa had merely nodded her approval. Her mind was wrapped up in something else. The Arithmancy equations that she nearly always kept running in her study at the Manor had changed. It had made her hyper vigilant. More aware of her surroundings as she tried to keep watch for something that was different. Something, out of the ordinary…

“Mother, must I get dress robes too? I’m not going to need them until Solstice.”

Shaking her head gently, Narcissa’s platinum hair shifted around her in a perfect sheet. “You will not be home again before Solstice, Draco. And Grand-mère will insist on robes that fit properly.” The Lady Rosier was her grandmother, Draco’s great-grandmother, and yet, Narcissa was positive that that would make no difference when it came to her harsh criticism.

“But I will have grown again by Solstice.” His protest was well reasoned, she would give him that.

“And I am sure that Madam Malkin will take that into account. We can have the hem let out if you do indeed grow several centimeters.” Her voice was gentle, but firm, as she leveled icy blue eyes against her son. Draco pushed back more when Lucius was not around than he ever did in his father’s presence, but Narcissa was not going to be flown over by her son.

The door to the shop opened again, and a small tinkling sound filled the space as the witch that was pinning Draco’s robes looked up. “Excuse me, Lady Malfoy.” A seamstress appeared to take the owner’s place as Narcissa nodded, and she turned to look at some fabric that had been brought out for her opinion, as another young boy was led into the fitting area.

He was small, too small, it appeared, to be starting Hogwarts. And dressed in clothes that were both muggle in nature and far too large for him. A mess of jet-black hair, and what appeared to be broken spectacles were prominent about the young boy.

Narcissa had been taking in his appearance, momentarily distracted from both her thoughts of her Arithmancy, and the midnight blue

fabric that had been brought out to her, when she realized what Draco was saying. “When we’re done here we are going to meet Father, and I plan on dragging them to look at racing brooms.”

“Draco!” She chastised her son for his apparent lack of manners and swept back over to the boys. “Manners.” Her icy eyes were softer somehow, gentler, as she turned to look at the smaller boy, “I apologize for my son’s rudeness.” It was then she realized that no one had accompanied the young man into the shop. “Are you here all by yourself?”

“Yes, ma’am.” The boy nodded, and then quickly shook his head, “I mean, Hagrid, is with me. But he went to The Leaky Cauldron.”

“I see…” Something prickled at the back of Narcissa’s neck, and she offered the boy a charming smile, “My name is Lady Malfoy, this is my son, Draco. Are you from a muggle family if Hagrid is the one escorting you?” Why on earth anyone would think that man capable of showing a muggleborn around Diagon Alley was beyond Narcissa, but she had long ago stopped trying to make sense of Albus Dumbledore’s choices.

“Yes ma’am. I live with my aunt and uncle in Surrey. My name is Harry. Harry Potter.”

Harry Potter.

Without trying, they had seemingly found the boy that the Dark Lord had been defeated by ten years ago. This boy was responsible for so much, and yet, he looked as though he knew next to nothing. As if magic, and the world all around him, were brand new.

“Harry Potter?” Draco’s eyes went a little wide at the discovery of the young man’s identity, but he did not say anything else. Instead, she saw him turn his eyes back to her.

Narcissa shifted just a bit to her left, putting herself between both boys and the window that faced out into the Alley. “Well then, hello Lord Potter.” Her tone was still warm, and welcoming, entirely the opposite of what one would expect to hear from a witch in possession of such icy eyes.

“Lord?” The boy shook his head as he turned his eyes back up to hers, from where they had been trained on Draco. “I’m not a Lord. I’m Harry. Just Harry.”

Her laughter was melodic, and a magic that could not really be named seemed to exude from it as the witch shook her head again. “Indeed, you are though. You are The Lord Potter and have been since the night that your father passed away.”

“Did you know him?” There was an eagerness to the boy that made Narcissa’s chest ache. He seemed almost desperate in his inquiry.

“Only a little, more in passing than anything. He was friends with my cousin.” Though perhaps that was a story better left for another time. “I knew your mother, though. Your parents were a few years behind me in school, but your mother and I were once in the same club.”

“Alright boys,” The witches that were kneeling at their feet seemed to finish with each of them at the same time, “you’re both finished, you can hop down.”

Narcissa stepped back and automatically lifted a hand to both boys to allow them to step down. Draco took it without thinking, but she saw Harry flinch back. As though the sudden raise of her hand were going to strike him. Slowly, she let the hand drop, and the same prickle at the back of her neck that had caused her to introduce herself had the already petite witch crouching down in front of the young boy. “Harry… I am not going to hurt you. I promise.”

The witch felt her husband before he even entered the shop. The tug on the bond that they shared alerting her to his presence, but she did not take her eyes from Harry as she felt Lucius open the door. “Narcissa?” His tone held the unasked question, but she only shook her head in reply. Not even turning to look at him yet as she tried to pull Harry’s eyes back to her.

Draco shifted around her and came to stand at his father’s side as Lucius’ voice floated through her mind. His hand rested comfortingly on her shoulder as he stepped up behind her. *“Narcissa, what’s going on?”*

“This boy is Harry Potter.” She had answered without even turning around, *“And he is being abused.”*

She knew. The moment her hand had come up. The moment that the boy had flinched. Narcissa had known. Instinct had screamed at her. Instinct that she knew now her own mother had never had. For every blow that Cygnus Black had inflicted upon his daughters, Druella had looked the other way. Narcissa could not do such a thing. She would never look away from a child that seemed to be living in their own

version of that hell.

“Are you sure?” Lucius’ voice echoed through their bond, and Narcissa nodded. She was more than sure. Not only that the boy had introduced himself as Harry Potter, but that he was far too small, far too skinny for his age. And the way that he had flinched. Only someone that had been struck for every little thing would have flinched at the offer of her hand to step down from the stool.

“Harry?” Narcissa’s voice was once again warm, and soothing, as she spoke to the boy, “I’m going to stand up now, I wanted you to know before I moved too fast, alright?”

The young boy gave a small nod, and Narcissa moved so slowly, and gracefully, as she stood back up to hover between her husband and her son. The very last thing that she wanted to do was scare the child. He had already been through enough, and she was sure that they did not even know the half of it. She felt the reassuring presence of Lucius’ hand on the small of her back, and the familiar thrum of his magic through her skin as he offered her strength, and peace in this moment.

Draco had remained quiet, while she had been speaking to the other boy, but he slipped his hand into hers as she returned to them, and Narcissa turned to smile down at her son. He would be bigger than her soon, and she hated that. But she was pleased with how respectful he was being right now.

“Why don’t we pay for our parcels that the ladies have gathered so nicely for us, and then we can figure out where we are going next.” Lucius’ voice was confident, and sure, as it always was, and Narcissa urged him to move slowly as he stepped around her, and over toward Harry. “Come along, Lord Potter, just over here.”

Lucius guided Harry to pay for his robes, and Narcissa turned to crouch down in front of Draco. “I know that this is not how we planned on this day going, but I need you to trust your father and I, alright?”

“Yes, Mother.” He nodded his agreement, and she watched as pale blue eyes, so very like her own, flicked toward the counter, “Is that really Harry Potter?”

“I believe so, yes.” She answered him softly, the words barely more than a whisper.

Draco seemed to study the other boy for a long moment before he looked back at her, “What’s the matter with him?”

Narcissa sighed and brushed her fingers over the hair that he had taken to slicking back off his forehead, “Nothing is the matter with him. But I do not think that he has had the easiest life since he left our world. Someone has treated him very poorly.”

“But… I thought everyone loved him? Isn’t that what Father says? That everyone loves the famous Harry Potter, for what he did to the Dark Lord?”

“Yes.” Narcissa nodded gently, and she offered a sad sort of smile, “But right now, I want you to try and be kind. And see if you cannot make him a little more comfortable by being his friend.”

Draco nodded again, “Yes, Mother.”

Leaning forward, Narcissa pressed a soft kiss to her son’s forehead, and then she once more rose to her feet. With the same lithe movement, and languishing grace, that spoke of a power that rested within her. Lucius was guiding Harry back toward them as she drew back to standing, when Harry pointed out the window, and gave a little wave, “There’s Hagrid. Thank you, Lord Malfoy.” The boy nodded up at her husband, and then turned back to look at her, “Thank you, Lady Malfoy. I’m sorry I was frightened.”

“That is quite alright, Harry.” Instinct had her wanting to reach out and draw him to her. To never let him out of her sight. But Narcissa knew she had no right to do such a thing. Even if she could practically hear the wheels spinning in Lucius’ mind, she knew even he could not have come up with a reason to keep Harry with them so quickly. “I am sorry I frightened you.”

“Perhaps we should go and speak to Mr. Hagrid.” Lucius had once more returned to her side, and laid his hand on her back, “There is no reason that the boys could not finish their shopping together, if Lord Potter would like some company?”

She watched as Harry glanced at Draco, and her son smiled at him as he led the way to the door, “Do you know anything about Quidditch, Harry?”

Birthday Presents

Chapter Summary

> In which we learn a little more about Narcissa's past, and she - in turn - learns about Harry's.

They let the boys leave the shop in front of them, and Narcissa felt her breath come a little easier as Lucius pressed a kiss to her hair. “I don’t like the idea of sending him off with Hagrid, Lucius.” She had no real reasoning behind it. Nothing other than the prickle at the back of her neck, and the reminder of the Arithmancy equations that she had left running.

“I know.” His voice was soft in her ear, “I can tell. Are you alright?” There was an air of concern about him that Narcissa was certain had nothing to do with the boy walking along in front of them with their son. He was worried about her.

Slipping her hand into his arm, Narcissa nodded, “I’ll be fine. I’m more worried about Harry. You didn’t see him flinch, Lucius.”

Using magic to hold the door open for his wife, Lucius shook his head, “I didn’t. But I felt your reaction to it.” Her thoughts had immediately been of her father. Of the ways that Cygnus had always hurt the three of them. Almost instantly, Lucius had stopped walking, and turned Narcissa to face him. His hands on her waist encircling her completely, but not tight enough to make her feel trapped. Only comforted and cared for. “He will not hurt you ever again. You know that.”

She did. She knew that Lucius had guaranteed such a thing. No one would ever treat her the way that her father had. But the way that young Lord Potter had reacted to such a simple, unthreatening, gesture… It made her worry. Someone out there was treating him like that.

“There ye are, Harry.” Hagrid’s voice cut through her thoughts as she and Lucius followed the boys into the street. “Got yer robes?”

“Yes.” The boy nodded, and then looked over his shoulder at Draco, who had fallen back a couple of steps, before his gaze drifted back to her husband. “Lord Malfoy helped me pay for them.”

“Lord Malfoy?” The man’s attention finally turned to her family, and Narcissa found herself squaring her shoulders just a touch. “What ‘re ye doing with the Malfoys, Harry?”

Lucius did not move from her side, but Narcissa felt the bit of annoyance that soaked through him as he leveled his gaze against the man. “You, Hagrid, left him alone to get his robes, and my wife found him unattended in the shop while you were off having a drink.”

Narcissa supposed that was more or less true. Though she hadn’t deliberately been searching for the boy.

“I didn’ ask you, Malfoy. I asked Harry.”

The witch refrained from rolling her eyes, and instead she took her attention away from the giant of a man, and let it linger on the boys in front of her. Her own son had stayed close by, within arm’s reach of both herself and Lucius, but what surprised her was that Harry Potter had as well. Hagrid’s mannerisms were not endearing him to the boy as much as he surely would have liked, and Narcissa was well aware of the proximity that Harry was keeping to both Draco and herself.

“They were helping me.” He gave a small shrug as he answered the man. “Lord Malfoy said that I could get the rest of my things along with Draco.”

“Of course, you can,” Narcissa took a step forward and drew both Draco and Harry back into her orbit. She was not going to ask permission from the man, Lucius could deal with that, “Why don’t we see about getting your books next, hmm?” She knew that Lucius had already been to Flourish and Blotts and put in the order for Draco’s things, but it would hardly take them a moment to duplicate the set for Harry.

Turning slowly, she ushered both boys in front of her as she heard Hagrid start to protest. “Now see here Lady Malfoy, ye have no right ter be tellin’ Harry where ter go.”

“Harry is a child, and someone needs to help him navigate all of this. If he wants to accompany Draco, are you the one that is going to tell him no?” Her gaze was piercing as she leveled it against the man, her arm slowly extending to shelf both boys, as if her small frame would prove much of a physical barrier between them and the rest of the Alley.

“I suppose not.” There was a distinct grumble to the man’s words, but

Narcissa ignored them. Whether he was pleased or not mattered very little to her. Her only cause for concern was Draco and Harry.

Keeping them in front of her, and trusting Lucius to watch her back, Narcissa swept the boys into the bookshop, and set about asking for the same set of books for Harry that Lucius had already ordered be collected for Draco.

“Hagrid doesn’t seem so happy.” She overheard Harry comment to Draco as they were looking at some of the other books in the shop while they waited on the employees to collect the ones they need.

Narcissa saw Draco lift one shoulder in a shrug out of the corner of her eye. “He’ll get over it. He probably just doesn’t like Mother and Father helping you instead of him doing it.”

“Why not?” The genuine curiosity was back in the boy’s voice.

Draco dropped the book he had been looking at back on the pile of similar titles and shrugged in earnest this time. “Because we’re Slytherins.” Her son made a funny little face and then corrected himself, “Or, Mother and Father were. I won’t really know until I get there. But I’m sure I’ll be in Slytherin.”

“What’s Slytherin?”

“It’s your house, at school. You get sorted and then that’s where you live for the rest of the time. Malfoys are always Slytherins.”

“Oh…” There was a hesitation to the way that Harry seemed to be taking in that information and Narcissa moved back over to them, a couple of new Arithmancy texts tucked in the crook of her arm.

“Have you found anything extra you want to add to your schoolbooks?” She had seen Draco eyeing a book on Quidditch, and Harry was still holding one about jinxes. He quickly put it down when she asked her question.

“May I have this one, Mother?”

Draco held up the Quidditch book, and she nodded her approval, before she turned her eyes back to Harry. “What about you, Harry? I do believe someone told me it is your birthday. Would you like a book? We’d be more than happy to get it.”

It was the least she could do, really, and she knew that the jinxes in

the book he was holding were relatively harmless, even if he managed to perform them on someone.

“Oh, no, Lady Malfoy. I don’t need it.” Harry shook his head, “I never get presents for my birthday.”

Something about the way that he said it made the back of her neck prickle again. And Narcissa offered him another of those warm, magical, smiles. “Well, I would like to change that, if you would let me.”

“Well…” Harry looked over at her son, whom she was pleased to see nodded encouragingly, and then he turned back to her. “Thank you, Lady Malfoy.” He lifted the book out toward her, and Draco did the same with the Quidditch book that he was holding. Both of which Narcissa brought floating onto the stack in the crook of her arm.

“Stay close, boys, while I take all of these to the counter.” The last thing she needed was them getting lost in the expanse of this shop. Narcissa held a certain fondness for Flourish and Blotts, and books in general, but she would be the first to tell you how easily you could get lost in the shelves.

She trusted Draco to heed her warning and stick to areas where she could see them as she headed for the counter to pay. She authorized the funds for the books in her arms, and Draco’s school books to come out of their vault at Gringotts, and then summoned Harry over to her to pay for his schoolbooks.

“Alright dears,” she cast a featherlight charm, and then a shrinking charm, on the packages of books, and tucked them into her pocket, doing the same for Harry’s stack and offering them to him. “What else is on the list? Potions equipment?”

“And wands!” Draco’s enthusiasm was catching, and she saw Harry grin as well.

“And wands.” She conceded, “But how about we visit the apothecary first, and get what you need, and then we can finish up with wands?” She had been pushing open the door of the shop as she let them exit the building in front of her, as she had been speaking, and she heard Hagrid start to grumble once more.

“Yer not the one tha’s supposed ter be showin’ him ‘round, Malfoy.”

“Lady Malfoy,” Harry seemed to ignore the grumbling of the man, as

he spoke to him, “bought me a birthday present!” He cheerfully told the man as he bounced on the balls of his feet. “It’s a book all about jinxes and pranks to play on people.”

Lucius smirked a little bit as his arm slipped around her waist again, and he murmured against her ear, “Hagrid will play nice, I determined that he has not only left the boy alone in a shop while he went to the pub, he also has been doing illegal magic in order to collect him.”

Years of schooling her features into something unreadable kept the witch from rolling her eyes, but only barely. Of course, the man was even more grossly incompetent than she had expected. She was still watching Harry interact with him, while Draco hung closer to the two of them, and seemed to be transfixed by watching the giant of a man fumble to explain to Harry why he thought that he should come with him.

“Harry has never had a birthday present before.” Narcissa’s voice in her head sounded nearly as sad as that had made her feel. *“At least not that he remembers. How can anyone treat a child like that?”* Her own childhood had been abusive. She knew that. But almost to counteract the abuse her father had lavished them with gifts.

“I don’t know.” He did not shake his head, but Narcissa felt it just the same through their bond, *“Something about this whole thing doesn’t feel right. He was heralded as The Boy-Who-Lived, and yet, it seems as if he were cut off entirely from our world. Dumbledore is up to something.”*

Albus Dumbledore was nearly always up to something. But as they started to usher the boys up the street and into the apothecary, Narcissa let her mind start to linger on what. Lucius had always been the better potioneer, and so she let him guide the boys through the apothecary, pleased to see that Harry had taken to him almost as much as he had to her. Though it wasn’t difficult to see the way that he lingered just out of arms reach of either one of them. Always keeping his eyes down. Never asking for anything directly. Even limiting the number of questions that he asked anyone other than Draco. Whatever life Albus Dumbledore had attempted to give him, Narcissa was sure that it had been much, much worse.

Hagrid had disappeared again while they had been in the apothecary, and when they stepped outside Narcissa was surprised to see him standing before them with a snowy white owl in a cage. “Happy Birthday, Harry.”

Cautiously, the boy stepped forward to inspect the bird in the cage, and then he shook his head a little bit. “How come it has to be in there?”

“Err,” the man seemed confused by the question, but Narcissa was not.

“It is safer for her if she is in the cage, Harry. But once you get her home you can leave it open, and she can fly in and out through your window. You do not have to keep her locked away.”

“Oh.” For a long moment, no one said anything, and then Harry turned to look back at Hagrid. “Thank you, Hagrid. But I don’t have a window to let her out of. And I don’t think she would like my cupboard very much.”

Narcissa’s neck prickled, and she felt as though she had been punched in the stomach. Cupboard? What on earth did he mean cupboard?

Objects in Motion

Chapter Summary

> In which: Everyone's telling the truth. No one considers kidnapping. And Harry makes a fateful decision.

Harry's words had been so casual, so honest. As if he thought nothing of the fact that he had dropped such heavy information into their laps. Narcissa was still trying to process what he had said, and how they were going to respond, when she felt Lucius' hand trail across the small of her back as he moved.

He had seemed to recover the fastest and crouched down to bring his eyes level with Harry's. "Harry, can you tell me what you mean by cupboard?"

Subconsciously, Narcissa had reached for Draco and pulled her son in close. His back pressed to her stomach as she wrapped her arms around his shoulders. She wanted to hear the answer to the question almost as much as she dreaded it. A cupboard?

Harry seemed to realize that he had said something upsetting, because his eyes had sought her own and then Hagrid's, before they settled on Lucius once more. "I mean… My cupboard. Under the stairs, at the Dursleys. It's where I sleep."

"I see." Lucius' voice remained level, and calm, but Narcissa could feel the unease that had settled upon him. The cupboard under the stairs was not a fit location to keep a house elf, let alone a child. "Have you always slept in the cupboard? You've never had your own bedroom?"

"Oh no." Harry shook his head, eyes wide at the suggestion, "There aren't enough rooms. Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia have one. Then Aunt Marge has one for her visits. And Dudley needs the other two."

"What does he need two rooms for?" Draco tipped his head to one side between her arms as his voice pipped up. Narcissa could not help worrying that having him present for this conversation would be damaging to him in some way. They had spent the last eleven years trying to protect their son from the horrors of the world, and it seemed that Harry Potter might just have been living every single one of them.

Harry shrugged as his eyes moved from Lucius – who was still crouched down in front of him – over to Draco. “One is where he sleeps, the other he keeps all of his broken toys and things that don’t fit in his first room in.”

Narcissa had heard more than enough of this, and she let her mind brush against Lucius’ as she drew in a deep breath, *“He cannot go back there, Lucius. They are treating him like an animal.”* She was not sure what ground that they had to stand on to see him removed, but she was sure that there had to be something… There had to be a loophole, somewhere, that would see him removed from their care.

“No, he cannot, but we cannot just take him, Cis. There are laws, and rules, about this kind of thing. If you just refuse to let him go back there, that’s kidnapping.”

A small breath flared the witch’s nostrils, *“I highly doubt that they are going to notice or press charges.”*

“They might not,” Narcissa thought that she detected a trace of amusement in her husband’s tone in their mind, *“But I can almost guarantee you that Albus Dumbledore will. And kidnapping the boy is not going to work out in our favor in the end.”*

Even as he responded to her through their bond, Lucius was once again speaking to Harry. “Well, that doesn’t seem very fair, does it? We will have to see what we can do about that, Lord Potter.” There was a hint of a smirk on his face that Narcissa thought anyone else might have missed. “For now, why don’t you and Draco run along and look at brooms, and Lady Malfoy and I are going to talk to Hagrid, alright?”

He moved slowly, as he stood, and Narcissa released Draco at Lucius’ summoning wave. Letting the boys wander away from them to look at the broomstick in the window of the shop just a few meters further down the street.

“Hagrid, did you know that they were keeping young Harry in a cupboard?” Lucius’ voice was even, and betrayed no emotion, but Narcissa could feel the way that he had processed the information. The way that her own neck had prickled with it, she knew that Lucius was equally as upset. He had been her rescuer. He had taken her out of an abusive situation, and treated her with the love, and respect, that she had never believed that she deserved.

It had been impossible to rescue her as a child, but they could help

Harry. They could take him out of that situation, if they found a way around whatever choice had landed him there in the first place. Surely, there had to have been another option. It had been a war; there had been contingencies in place for everything. She and Lucius had made sure that Draco would be safe, and looked after, if anything would have happened to them. There was no way that the Potters had not done the same thing for Harry.

"I thought the same thing." Her husband's voice was low in her head as they waited for Hagrid to answer the question that he had posed out loud. Someone would have had to have been named as the guardian for Harry, and Narcissa had her doubts that it would have been Petunia Dursley.

"Of course not!" The giant man seemed to be offended by the accusation that he had known Harry was being treated so poorly, but Narcissa narrowed her eyes at him.

"So, you did not realize anything, when you went to collect him from the house? They simply let you in, and you had a proper look around?" There was an iciness to her voice that Lucius would not have had, but Narcissa did nothing to hide it. She was angry, furious, really, that anyone would treat a child the way that Harry had been treated. And the adults that had supposedly been looking out for him were grossly negligent.

Hagrid scuffed the toe of one large boot against the cobblestones, "I didn' pick him up from the house."

"Where did you collect him from then?" Her eyes narrowed, as she studied him.

He seemed to realize that he had been caught out, as he did not meet her eyes when he replied, "A hut, out ter sea. Had to track 'em down all over the place ter find him."

Lucius had said that the man had done magic, but Narcissa had not expected that he had had to traipse all over the country to try and collect the boy. "They did not want him to come back to our world?" Her hand slid discreetly into her husband's elbow, and she squeezed once. If they had taken Harry and run from just the letter, there was no logical reason to believe that they would deliver him to King's Cross in a month's time.

"They certainly did not. Said they weren' gonna pay fer it, neither. Not that he needs them to, of course."

“Hagrid, were you specifically told to return Harry to his aunt and uncle when you finished buying his school things today?” Lucius had had the same thought that Narcissa had, and she felt his approval at her new line of questioning.

“Err-” Hagrid seemed to think back on it as if trying to recall the conversation word for word. “No. Just ter collect Harry, and make sure he got all of his things fer school.”

“Excellent.” Lucius smiled then - a smile that the witch knew all too well - and Narcissa let go of his arm, her skirts swirling around her as she turned to follow in the direction the boys had gone down the alley. “Harry will be coming home with us then.”

“Now wait just a minute!” Hagrid’s voice boomed from behind her, but Narcissa had already turned her back on him. Leaving Lucius to calm the man and send him on his way as she made to extend the invitation to spend the rest of the summer with them to Harry.

The witch made her presence known as she descended upon them, not wanting to frighten Harry by just appearing behind him, but her smile was warm and welcoming as ever. “Now, where were we? Wands, I believe?”

“Yes!” Draco’s approval of their final stop was met with a tinkling of laughter from his mother, and she shook her head at him. “Come on, Harry!” He urged the smaller boy to follow him as he made to dart up the street toward Ollivander’s.

“Hold on just a moment.” Narcissa raised an eyebrow at her son, who stopped in his tracks and came slumping back over to where she and Harry were still standing. “Now, Harry, Hagrid was just telling Lord Malfoy and I how he picked you up, and the trouble that your aunt and uncle gave you about going to Hogwarts.” She saw his shoulders slump just a little at the recent memory, and she pressed on gently, “We want to make sure that you get to school safely, and on time. We would very much like for you to stay with our family for the rest of the summer.”

Surprise flooded the boy’s face, and she saw it reflected on her son’s for a moment as well, before Draco schooled his features into something a bit more refined. “Lady Malfoy, I… I don’t think I can. I don’t think my aunt and uncle would ever let me. I’ve never spent the night anywhere before. And I wouldn’t want to waste your space.”

Narcissa’s platinum hair moved in sheets around her again as she

shook her head slowly. “You are a not a waste of space, mine, or anyone else’s.” There was a gentle firmness to the way that she spoke. “Lucius will make sure that your aunt and uncle are informed that you are safe and being looked after.”

Harry looked at her for a long time, as if trying to process what she was telling him. And she knew that there was very little chance he would actually believe her. Promising him safety and care, likely seemed like a luxury that he could never expect. He was quiet for a very long time before he finally nodded. His eyes did not meet hers, and she was aware of how quickly he looked over at Draco – almost as if he were ascertaining if it would be okay with her son that he came to stay – before he spoke. “If you are sure…”

“I am positive.” Her voice was warm, and welcoming again, as she smiled down at the pair of them. So very opposite in nearly every way. “We are happy to have you. Now,” she lifted her hands slowly, and ushered them to turn down the street in front of her, “let’s see about those wands.”

Rare and Powerful

Chapter Summary

> In which we find a second connection, and this time it's much more positive.

Narcissa was not in the least worried about leaving Lucius to deal with Hagrid on his own. She knew her husband was more than capable of taking care of that bit of the problem, and she had turned her attention wholly on the boys that were just itching with anticipation to go and collect their wands. It was a big moment, she knew that. But she was also sure that Lucius would want to be there when Draco got his. And so, she lingered in the alley. Hoping that, even as the boys ran ahead of her, Lord Ollivander would not appear to start measuring and helping them, until they arrived.

The witch waited for Lucius to ensure that Hagrid was not about to fight them over their taking Harry home with them, and she sighed as her husband seemed to convince – or rather confuse – the man into believing that they would indeed be returning him to his aunt and uncle's. The way that Lucius had phrased it, however, gave no inclination as to when that reunion may occur. And, if Narcissa had anything to do about it, it would not. Not if she had the opportunity to keep Harry safe, and happy, under their roof.

She kept her eyes on the boys as they traversed the alley in front of her, but she smiled when she felt Lucius close the distance and lay his hand on her back once more. It was a comforting sort of contact. So familiar, after all these years, and yet so very welcome every time that he did it. "Is everything all settled then?" Narcissa kept her tone light, and casual, and she did not look up into his eyes. She knew that it was, she had been listening, even as she had walked away.

"It is." He nodded, and his thumb brushed against her spine through the satin of her outer robes. "Hagrid is none too pleased to have been relieved of his charge, but the young Lord Potter will not be going back to that house."

Narcissa leaned into her husband's side gently as he tucked her more securely under his arm and guided her to catch up to the boys. "I know that we did not expect this, and that it is a complicated thing, but Lucius…" She turned her eyes up to his face then, unsure how to give voice to what she was really feeling about having learned of his

home life all these years.

“I understand, Love.” In a rare display of public affection, Lucius brushed a kiss to her hair in the middle of the street. “We will figure this out. I felt how much this has affected you.”

Drawing a deep breath in through her nose, Narcissa gave herself a little shake, and forced herself to smile. “I don’t think that we should be talking about that in the middle of Diagon Alley. We can talk about it later, at home.” She gave a little nod to wear Draco and Harry were waiting for them outside of Ollivander’s Wand Shop. “I do believe our son may burst at the seams if we do not get him a wand soon.”

Lucius’ steel grey eyes flicked up to where their son was all but bouncing on the balls of his feet next to the smaller, dark haired, boy. “So, it would seem. We will have to practice being more poised in public.”

“Not today, Lucius.” She cautioned gently, thinking of Harry, and how much had already changed about his life today. They wanted him to trust them, and they would not earn his trust by putting their son down about his enthusiasm right now.

“No.” He gave a small shake of his head, “Of course not.” Opening the door for his wife, and both boys, Lucius shifted to let all three pass in front of him before he followed them into the shop. “Boys,” he looked down at both of them as the still air of the shop around them seemed to settle a hush over the little family, and their new friend, “I want you to be very respectful to Lord Ollivander. He is the best in the business.”

“Thank you, Lord Malfoy.” A misty sort of voice came from the shadows next to the stacks of wands that were piled between the shelves, and the next moment Lord Ollivander appeared. “Blackthorn and dragon heartstring, eleven and a quarter inches, rather rigid, no?”

“It is.” Lucius smirked and pulled his wand from his sleeve. “The same one that you sold me when I was eleven.” He was proud of having had the same wand all of his life and keeping it in such good condition.

“And the Lady Malfoy.” Lord Ollivander offered her a small bow before he straightened up and smiled at her, “Cherry and phoenix feather, ten inches, rather springing. Very rare.” His eyes seemed to spark a bit as he thought about the wand that had selected Narcissa as its owner when she had been barely bigger than Harry. “Very powerful, for such a petite witch.”

“I thank you, Lord Ollivander.” She gave him a dazzling smile, as she quipped in her head to her husband. *“He likes mine better than yours.”*

“That’s hardly a surprise.” He offered the subtlest roll of his eyes behind the other man’s back as the shop keeper took Narcissa’s hand in his and brushed a kiss to the back of her knuckles. *“He is flirting with you.”*

“Oh, let him.” She took her hand back from Lord Ollivander slowly, and her eyes found Lucius’ with just a hint at the mischief that they could get up to in their minds, *“He’s got to be well over one hundred. I’m hardly going to run off with him for flirting with me in front of you, and our son.”*

“You might shock the poor man to death if you started flirting back.”

“Well,” the corner of her mouth quirked up as Lucius’ gaze seemed to dare her to play with him, *“I would hate to be the death of someone quite like that.”*

“And how would you be the death of someone, Darling?” His fingers twitched at his sides, and Narcissa was sure that he had thought about getting his hands on her when they were alone.

“Now,” Lord Ollivander had turned to look at the boys that had followed Narcissa into the shop as the Malfoys had been silently flirting around him, “who do we have here?”

They were pulled out of their little game by his question, and Lucius answered, “This is our son, Draco. And his new friend Harry. They are both in need of their first wands today.”

Narcissa could see how excited Draco was, and she hoped that some of that would rub off on Harry. He looked a little nervous at how closely Lord Ollivander was looking at him. “Ah yes. Lord Potter… I had wondered when I would be seeing you.”

There was an air about the man that had always been a little spooky, and Narcissa gently reached out to lay a hand on Draco’s shoulder, and her fingers ghosted over the back of Harry’s as well, though she did not quite touch him.

“You… You were expecting me?” Harry gave a little gulp at the thought of someone looking out for him all this time.

“Indeed.” Lord Ollivander, nodded once, and summoned two

measuring tapes from the counter to come and start measuring the boys. “I had hoped that you would be coming here for your first wand. I sold your parents their first wands as well. Lily’s was willow. Rather swishy. Good for charmwork. And James…” he thought a second longer, “Mahogany, eleven inches, good for transfiguration.”

“Oh…” Harry seemed taken aback but such details of his parents. And this time Narcissa dared to touch him. Letting her fingers brush the back of his shoulder, to show him that she was there. The child gave a small jump at the contact, and turned to look over his shoulder at her, but he did not pull away from her touch, and after a moment, Narcissa had laid her hand more fully on his shoulder.

“Do you think that we can find something for the boys here today, Ollivander?” Lucius seemed less than thrilled with the man in front of them, and Narcissa was not surprised. He didn’t like anyone that flirted with her, even in the most mundane sense. Nor did he care for anyone that wasted time.

“Right. Yes. Of course, Lord Malfoy.” The tape measurers seemed to be measuring both boys independently of Lord Ollivander’s attention, because as he started to collect boxes from the shelves, the tapes continued to take their measurements. “Very different boys, very different indeed.”

He came back with a stack of boxes in each arm, and looked at the boys, “Alright, who is going first?”

“Draco can.” Harry piped up at once. And Narcissa released Draco’s shoulder so that he could step forward and try the first wand that Lord Ollivander held out to him. Narcissa found herself holding her breath as Lucius’ hand found its place on her back once more. But then, nothing happened.

The first five wands that Draco tried, there was nothing. The sixth one shot sparks that only just missed everyone else in the room. And the seventh seemed to wilt in his hand as he held it.

“Tricky… Tricky…” Lord Ollivander muttered to himself as he let his fingers tap against other boxes on the shelves before he looked back around at the Malfoy family that was standing there. “Let’s try this.”

He returned carrying a slender, rather plain looking wand. “Hawthorne and unicorn hair, ten inches, rather springy. Give it a try.”

No sooner had Draco taken the wand in his hand than Narcissa was positive that it was the right one. The air around her son seemed to glow, and his smile was true, and bright, as he looked up at Lord Ollivander, and then back around at herself and Lucius. “I found my wand!”

“You did.” She returned his smile and opened her arms for him. Wrapping him in a tight hug as Lord Ollivander sent the discarded wands back to their shelves. “I’m so proud of you!”

She was looking at the wand in his hand, when she heard Lucius give Harry a little encouragement to step forward and go about finding his wand next. Narcissa’s arms slipped over Draco’s shoulders, and she pulled his body back against hers as they watched the same process again. This time with Harry discarding several wands before anything happened. And Lord Ollivander finding himself in a more and more cheerful mood, the longer that this seemed to be taking.

“I wonder…” his eerie voice floated back to them, and Narcissa watched as he blew dust from a box that he had pulled down from a high shelf. “Here you are,” he turned the wand – handle out – toward Harry for him to take. “Beech and phoenix feather, eleven inches, rather supple.”

The same effect that had swept over Draco seemed to flood over Harry then, and Narcissa felt herself become relieved. She was not sure if she had expected the worst, with the abuse that the boy had suffered… But the fact that everything seemed to be going splendidly made her breathe a little easier. At least, until Lord Ollivander spoke again.

“Curious… Very curious.” He looked at the wand in Harry’s hand, and then back at the boy’s face. “Wands choose the wizard, Lord Potter. But it seems only fitting that this one has chosen you. You see, the phoenix, that’s tail feather resides in your wand, gave another feather…” His eyes flashed up to find Narcissa across the room behind her son, “Just one other.”

Harry looked up at Lord Ollivander, and then back over at Narcissa, “Is it the one in Lady Malfoy’s wand?” There was a little awe in Harry’s voice, and Narcissa had to admit, she felt just as shocked as Harry seemed to look.

“Indeed, it is. It made me very curious to try it out. For there were others, of course. That nice holly one, that we tried. I thought for sure that would be it. For it has a rare phoenix core too… But no. It is this

wand has chosen you."

"What does that mean?" Harry seemed to ask the question rather cautiously, as if he did not want to know the answer.

Lord Ollivander simply smiled, "It means, dear boy, that you and Lady Malfoy, have the same greatness about you. And perhaps," his eyes drifted away from Harry and back to Narcissa once more, "you were destined to find one another."

Making Plans

Chapter Summary

In which Lucius and Narcissa start to form a plan...

Taking the boys home to Malfoy Manor had been quite the experience itself, and once they had gotten Harry settled in the room across from Draco's – after much protest from the child that he certainly did not need anything so fancy – Narcissa sank onto the chaise in Lucius' study. He had left her to deal with getting Harry settled in earlier, and while she had felt his reassuring presence in the back of her mind, she had sought much closer proximity to him the moment that she could.

Lucius had looked up when she had swept into the room, and grinned a little bit as she sank down on the cushioned piece. "Your grand - mère would have a right fit if she saw you with your shoes on the chaise."

"Grand-mère is not here." Narcissa shot back softly, her arm covering her eyes as she laid back on the pillows. "Have we done the right thing, Lucius? I know I do not want him to have to go back there, but…"

"You have to stop worrying about it so much." His magic brushed over her, and Lucius felt Narcissa sigh. "Everything will work itself out. What do your equations say?"

"I don't know." She sighed heavily and let her arm drop away from her eyes as she started to wandlessly program the Arithmancy equation in the air above her head. "They don't really make sense. None of the answers are clear."

"We are going to have to figure out something." His voice was low, and resigned, as he watched his wife run the numbers across the room. "We can keep him here as Draco's friend for awhile, but I don't want to cause a problem. Not if we're going to see him taken out of that muggle home to begin with."

"We have to see that, Lucius." Narcissa turned her head to look over at him, "He cannot go back there. No one should grow up in a home like that." Thoughts of her own childhood floated back to her again, and Narcissa pushed them away. Locking them behind a door she had no intention of opening again right now.

Lucius was aware of his wife's feelings on the matter, and he sighed, "I know how you feel, Love. Every time that you returned to that castle, I hated myself for letting you go. But you know as well as I that things are not always so simple." He had hated himself, every time that he dropped her off on the heart of Black Castle. But he had had no claim on her, until he had been able to propose. And then he had brought her here, to the safety of Malfoy Manor.

She was flicking through the proposed lines, and theories, that the Arithmancy had displayed, and Narcissa was finding herself coming up on far too many loose ends. "There must be a way, Lucius. There must be some sort of statute to take a child out of an abusive situation when they have disclosed the abuse openly. Especially considering that it is a muggle household, and Harry is a wixen Lord."

"I am not saying that there isn't, Cis." Lucius shook his head gently, "But we must find the right ones. I will go into the office tonight after the boys have been put to bed, and I will see what I can find."

The witch sighed heavily, "I know that you are doing this for me, my love. And I know the price that will come with it. Harry Potter under our roof will not go unnoticed, but I could not let that man take him back there."

"Hagrid is hardly a man." Lucius turned his nose up a bit at the notion that the man had been placed in charge of the young Lord Potter's care at all. "He should not have been trusted with a dog, let alone a child. Wandering off to the pub… He is lucky that you and Draco were in that shop, and not someone worse."

"Oh?" Narcissa let her hand drop, and the Arithmancy that she had been conducting seemed to dissipate in the air as she smirked over at her husband, "And just who would be worse, Dear?" She could think of a few families, just off the top of her head. Those that would have seen Harry fall all that much further into Albus Dumbledore's pocket the moment that they got their hands on him.

Lucius shot her a playful glare that said quite plainly she knew exactly to whom he had been referring.

"Don't tell me you are still quarreling with Arthur Weasley…" There was a bit of a taunt in her voice as she rolled onto her side and propped her head up on her hand to look at him. "Surely not. You would never pick a fight with a man so much weaker than yourself, Lucius. How terribly unchivalrous of you."

“You are making fun of me, Wife.” His playful glare intensified as he narrowed his eyes at her. “You know perfectly well that I never start fights. I simply finish them.”

“Mhmm.” A smirk tugged at the corner of Narcissa’s lips. “And the fight that has all but ensued with Albus Dumbledore? Who has started that?”

“You.” He answered with a laugh. “You’re the one that was considering simply abducting the boy.”

“I was not!” She sat up completely, shaking her head across the study at him. “I never explicitly thought that we should just bring him home with us. You were implying things from my thoughts all on your own.”

“I’m sure I was.” The Malfoy Lord conceded the point to his little witch, even if he was rather certain that she had thought that bringing Harry home with them would simply be easier than dealing with Hagrid. “I do believe that we should prepare ourselves though, Hagrid will have reported to Dumbledore by now that Harry did, indeed, not return directly to the Dursleys. And while I may have implied that we would see about getting him back to them, I never stated that we would be doing so.”

“Dumbledore left the boy on his own to be abused for a decade, Lucius. Do you honestly think that he is going to run off to Surrey to check and make sure that he has returned there this evening?” As she spoke, Narcissa rose from the chaise, and crossed the room to lean back on the edge of his desk, facing him.

Lucius sat back in his chair as she approached, and he reached up one hand to draw his fingers over the curve of her hip as he thought about the situation. “Honestly, he might.” He gave a small shake of his head and pulled his hand back to drag it down his own face instead of ghosting against his wife. “Leaving him to be raised by an aunt and uncle that were expected to care for him fits far more cleanly into whatever the old fool has planned than Harry Potter ending up in Malfoy Manor.”

Narcissa huffed a bit through her nose and shook her head. “Let him come. Albus has no more authority over Harry than we do. At least not legally. Surely, Lily and James Potter were not *that* stupid.” She had plenty of opinions on her cousin’s best friend, and his muggleborn wife. But no one in their right mind would have ever named Albus

Dumbledore the guardian of their child. No one was more scheming or manipulative than that man.

Then again… Lions never had seen as well as Snakes.

"No." He shook his head again, "I don't believe that they would have left the boy with Dumbledore, but I don't think that Potter would have left him with muggles either. Even an idiot would have known that that would never keep him safe from the Dark Lord."

Narcissa's hand moved up to squeeze Lucius' shoulder affectionately at the mention of his old master. They had made their choices and come down on the right side of things as the dust had cleared, but it had not been without paying a price. A price that would come about to be collected once more when some of their former friends realized that Harry Potter was under their roof. "Do you think that we have legal standing to get their will?" He was a lawyer, and she was a prominent socialite, but that did not mean that they could just do and take whatever they wanted, even if that was what the public believed. Lucius may have had sway over the Minister, but even that came with a price.

"I'm not sure I do, but if my hunch is correct, I think you might."

"Me?" Her eyebrows knitted together as she looked down at him, "What do you mean I might? What hunch are you betting on?"

He sat forward, and moved his hands to either side of her thighs as he tugged her over in front of him, bringing her knees to the inside of his own. "Think about it, Cis. If something happened to us, who was Draco supposed to go to?"

"Andromeda." They had made the choice, even though her relationship with her sister had been strained. She knew that Andromeda would not have refused him, and she had known that Draco would have been safe.

"Exactly. I don't have any siblings, but you do. You chose your sister."

"Which is what Albus claims that Lily would have done." She protested slightly, "Despite their differences."

Lucius shook his head, "But James wasn't an only child."

"Yes, he was." Narcissa gave a slight shake of her head, and then she paused as she realized what Lucius meant, "Sirius."

“Sirius.” He confirmed her train of thought, “He wasn’t their Secret Keeper no matter what the old fool thinks. That was Pettigrew. And Sirius went to Azkaban for it. No one would have even looked twice at giving him Harry if he were locked up.”

“And you think that as a Black I can get a copy of Lily and James’ will?” She narrowed her eyes as she looked down at him. He was an excellent attorney, but she was not sure that even he could get that through a legal system.

“No.” Lucius shook his head slightly, “I think as Sirius’ proxy you could be entitled to everything that he would have been. Including the will, and if my hunch is correct, Harry.”

The witch listened to what her husband was saying, and on some level, she wanted to believe him, but she knew that it was never going to be that simple. Not only had she not seen or spoken to her cousin in well over a decade, but there was also the little matter of him being locked up in Azkaban. They had denied her a visit to see her own sister, much less her cousin, and then she had to convince him to trust her with this?

“I know…” Lucius’ fingers flexed on her hips as he looked up at her. “I know that this is a lot, and I know that it’s not something that we’re going to be able to make happen overnight, but Cis… If you want to fight for Harry, if you want to protect him, I think we’re going to need to talk to your cousin.”

Narcissa was quiet for a long moment as she thought about everything that had come crashing down around them today. Not only the Arithmancy equations, and the linking core between her wand and Harry’s, but the instinct that seemed to be guiding her. The way that she knew that she would be putting up this fight. That she would give everything that she had to keep Harry safe, just the same as she would have to protect her own son.

“Alright.” She brought her hands up to sweep over his shoulders, and then brushed one over the back of Lucius’ neck as she nodded down at him, “Alright. Let’s see if we can find a way to get to Sirius. You’re right, we’re going to need answers if we’re going to make a case, and that’s the only lead that we’ve got.”

The Uninvited Guest

Chapter Summary

> In which someone uninvited, and rather unwelcome, arrives at Malfoy Manor.

As it would turn out, talking to Sirius was going to be a great deal more difficult than anyone anticipated. Lucius spent the majority of the next two days trying to find a way around all of the sanctions and the laws that prevented contact with the man who was in solitary confinement in the island prison. Surely, there had to be something that they could do. Some way around every barrier that seemed to be erecting itself directly in their path with each step. Every time that he turned around there was another problem. And when Lucius returned to Malfoy Manor on the 2nd of August, he was no closer to finding the answers that they were looking for than he had been on the 31st.

Narcissa was not an attorney. She had gone to university, after Hogwarts, but she had studied Arithmancy and Magic Theory. She was an expert in things like warding, and magical calculations. But to try and help Lucius with cutting through all of the red tape? She hadn't the faintest idea where to begin. Normally, if they wanted something, they simply invited Cornelius Fudge to dinner, and bargained for it. The problem was, now that Harry was in their home, they were being a tad more selective about who they allowed to come traipsing through the front doors.

A memo that Albus Dumbledore did not seem to receive.

Lucius had only just returned from the Ministry and greeted Narcissa and the boys – both of whom were laid out on the rug in front of her chair, as Draco patiently taught Harry how to play chess – when one of the house elves popped into the room and announced that there was a visitor at the front gates.

They had agreed not to alarm Harry about what was going on, and instead make him feel as comfortable as possible here, and yet, a visitor was reason for concern. It was not as though Lucius had been being all that quiet about what he was up to, and while there could have been several explanations for Narcissa's sudden desire to contact her cousin and gain control of the Black family assets, there was only one that aligned with the rather persisting rumor that Harry Potter had not only returned to their world, but that he was currently staying

at Malfoy Manor.

The Malfoys exchanged a rather intense look, and a sea of information passed back and for the between them. Silently communicating their days, and Narcissa's assurance that the wards would keep their visitor at the edge of the property until they were welcomed in. She had designed the security system around this place herself, and it was far and away one of the best in all of the kingdom.

Turning back to the elf, Lucius raised his eyebrows expectantly, "Can you tell me who this visitor is?"

"Of courses, Sir." The little elf nodded, and then looked back up at the Lord Malfoy, "It is being the Headmaster of Hogwarts, Sir. He is asking to speak to both yous and the Mistress."

"I see." Lucius shot another glance back over toward his wife, and he took a deep breath. "Please see him in, and escort him to my study. The Lady Malfoy will join us shortly."

"Yes, Sir." The elf bowed low, so low that her nose almost touched the ground, and then she was gone with a little pop.

"Cis," Lucius spoke aloud, though it was entirely for the benefit of the boys that had stopped their chess game midway through and were looking expectantly back and forth between the pair. "Take the boys upstairs, and make sure that they are safe in their rooms before you join me." Rarely did Lucius give Narcissa orders, but there was no question that the tone of his voice was meant to be obeyed.

Quietly, the witch – who had already been tweaking the wards enough to let Albus Dumbledore onto the grounds with enough clearance to get him at least in the house, though not past the front hall and Lucius' study – nodded and she squeezed his arm as she stood and moved around him. A silent, soft, intimate, way of saying that she would be right there. Right there in his mind, and back at his side, in only a moment.

"Come on, boys." She stepped toward them and ushered them up from the floor and in front of her as they headed for the stairs. Neither one gave any protest, though Draco looked as though he would have liked to ask several questions, and Harry had gone rather pale. "Why don't we summon that chess set up to your room, Draco, and you can continue to teach Harry to play?"

It was placating, and done with the intent to distract her son, and

Harry, from the idea that anything might have been going poorly. But Narcissa knew they could both see through it. It was a poor suggestion at best, and in the end, she could only hope that they would both mind her words and stay where she put them. If Albus Dumbledore had taken it upon himself to visit, then Harry was exactly as valuable of an asset as they had thought. And she was not going to have him, or Draco, in harm's way.

"Lady Malfoy?" Harry spoke up quietly as Narcissa directed both of them into Draco's bedroom, and closed the door behind them, before she started to cast some more wards around the space to keep them safe.

"Yes, Harry?" She had asked him more than once now to call her Narcissa, and he seemed rather stubborn about the fact that he was not going to. Now did not seem like the time to push about it, as she lowered her wand and turned to face him.

The child took a deep breath, and he brought his eyes up to hers, "If I am causing a problem by being here, you can send me back. I don't mind going back to the Dursleys', really." There was a note to his tone that seemed to show that he was doing his absolute best to sell that point of view, but Narcissa was not having it.

"You are not a problem, Harry. You are a guest in our home. And it is important that we make our guests feel safe and cared for. I am sure that whatever the headmaster has come to say, Lucius and I are quite capable of facing it." She offered a warm smile and reached up slowly to touch the outside of his shoulder. "Everything will be alright."

Before he could protest any further, she gave a soft squeeze to his upper arm, and then kissed Draco on the forehead before she disappeared with a little louder pop than the elf had.

Harry sighed as he turned to look at Draco, "I don't want to cause all of this fuss. They could really send me back. And then I wouldn't be in anyone's hair anymore."

Shaking his head, Draco moved to the window to see if he could see the headmaster before he entered the house, but from his window you could only see the far end of the drive, and Dumbledore must have been further along by now. "She's not going to send you back." He turned back to look at the other boy. "Mother. She's not going to send you back to the muggles unless someone forces her hand. She's got Father looking for ways to make sure you don't ever have to go back

there. I heard them talking."

"Ever?" Harry's eyes widened a little bit. "But I don't have any other family, or anything. Where would I go?" For a horrible second Harry thought about Mrs. Figg, and all of her cats, and wondered if maybe he would have to go and live with her, or something. That sounded awful.

"Here, of course." Draco looked at him like he had three heads. "We're not going to just abandon you and send you to an orphanage or something."

"Here?" Harry looked around him, "But… You don't even know me. Any of you. Your mum and dad, they don't have to be so nice to me. I don't deserve any of it. I'm nobody."

"You're not." He shook his head and sank down on the end of his bed, "You're Harry Potter. And that means you're special. Besides, Mum has already made up her mind. You'll have a hard time leaving now." He laughed a little bit. "She's decided you're staying. So, unless you don't want to…"

"No." Harry shook his head and quickly caught himself for such a hasty response. "No," he started again, slower, "It's not that I don't want to. I just… Nobody has ever cared about me before. Or tried to protect me. Why is she doing it?" He looked over at the spot that the Lady Malfoy had disappeared from, unsure how to feel about the whole thing.

"Who knows?" Draco shrugged, and then grinned when their chess board from downstairs appeared on the floor between them. "Want to keep playing?"

Harry wasn't sure what to think, or how to accept that the Malfoys wanted him to stay here. That they were going through all of this trouble to protect him from something… From what? Why did they want to keep him, and Draco, away from Albus Dumbledore? What was it that Hagrid had said? Dumbledore was the greatest headmaster Hogwarts had ever seen? If that was true, why was he so bad? Trying to keep it all straight in his mind, Harry nodded, and dropped down to sit on his side of the board that the Lady Malfoy had sent upstairs. "Sure, who's turn is it?"

As the boys settled back into their game, Harry's mind filled with all of his confusion about the last few days, and Draco concerned that maybe Harry didn't like them as much as he liked having someone his

own age around, elsewhere in the manor, the front door was opening. The same elf that had come to report Albus Dumbledore's presence at the gates had shown the man up the front walk, and into the study just off of the main foyer where Lucius and Narcissa Malfoy were waiting.

She had returned downstairs after sealing the boys safely in Draco's room and found herself taking a deep breath as Lucius had wrapped her in his arms. A moment of stillness passed between them before either one moved, and then Narcissa's thoughts gently permeated the quiet. *"What is he doing here, Lucius?"*

"I don't know." He shook his head as he answered her, and though he held her in his arms, his eyes were on the door. *"But I am sure that we are about to find out. Whatever it is, we'll handle it. I promise."*

Narcissa nodded in reply, and shifted away from him as she felt the wards shift around them again. Albus Dumbledore was in their home, and then all of a sudden there he was. In his sweeping robes, with his long beard, and his pointed hat, he looked every bit the wizard that you would expect for a man of his generation. There were no well-tailored suits, or dinner jackets for someone like Albus Dumbledore. Instead, there was this.

Manners seemed to kick in after a moment's pause, and Dumbledore gave a stiff bow to the Lord and Lady Malfoy before he straightened and looked directly at Lucius. "Lord Malfoy, I am sorry for the intrusion, but I have only now returned to Hogwarts and Hagrid informed me what happened in Diagon Alley. I take it Harry is here, and not with his aunt and uncle?"

Lucius moved his hand down to rest on the small of Narcissa's back as she stood next to him, and he eyed the headmaster with caution as he spoke. Nothing in his facial expression or the way that he was holding himself gave anything away, but when Dumbledore posed his question, he had to refrain from rolling his eyes. "Indeed, he is, Headmaster."

"I see, yes, well…" There was a certain quiet lit to the man's voice that made it plain he was very rarely without all of the information and left as the one not holding all of the cards. "For his own safety, I do believe that it would be best if I were to accompany Harry back there."

"No." Narcissa had told herself that she was going to let Lucius take

the lead. That she was not going to get involved unless she had to. But the mere mention of Harry returning to the muggles, and what they had done to him, was enough to put her on edge.

Dumbledore's twinkling blue eyes found her own icy ones, and they held one another's gaze for a long moment before the man acknowledged what she said, "Lady Malfoy?"

"I said no." Her voice was no cruel, or harsh, but it was very cool and clear, "Harry is not going anywhere. Not unless he wishes to. You will not remove him forcibly from our home."

"I'm afraid that is not your decision, my lady." His voice was equally as soft, but anyone that entered that space in that moment would have been able to tell. Albus Dumbledore and Narcissa Malfoy had met head-to-head on a battlefield that only one of them had known that they were entering. And it hadn't been the headmaster.

The Lady Malfoy's eyes narrowed a fraction, "Nor is it yours." She did not move from Lucius's side, but there was a power that seemed to ooze out of the witch as she spoke, filling the space around them. "I do not yet know what game you are playing here, Headmaster. But believe me when I say that I am prepared to win it."

"I'm sure that I haven't the faintest idea-"

"On that we most certainly agree." She all but snapped at the man as she cut him off, and Lucius' hand slid from the small of her back around to her hip to give a gentle, chastising, squeeze. It would do them no good to provoke the old man. Narcissa drew in a deep breath, "Headmaster, you speak of Harry's safety in that house, but I do not believe that you know at all what the last years of his life have been like in that home. When is the last time that you checked in on him there, if you are so concerned as to come all the way here from Scotland?"

"Well, you see, I am a very busy man, my lady. Finding time to go and check on a boy that I have every reason to believe is being well cared for by the last living members of his family was hardly-"

"Important?" She interrupted him once more, this time with an arch to her brow, "Hardly important, to check in on the young boy that was heralded as the savior of our world? Surely even you could have made time for that…"

Albus Dumbledore seemed to be surprised with the direct attack

leveled against him by the Lady Malfoy. There were very few people that spoke to him in such a way anymore. He had become rather accustomed to everyone trusting that what he said, and did, was the right thing to do. The thing that would do the greatest good in the world. Opposition in the case of young Lord Potter was hardly what he had been expecting, and most definitely not from the Lady Malfoy.

"See here, my lady. I wish Harry no ill will, I merely want to do what is best for him. And residing with his aunt and uncle is where he belongs. If you would be so kind as to-"

Narcissa bristled once more, but Lucius beat her to the punch, "Dumbledore, my wife has made our position perfectly clear. Lord Potter is here as a guest of our son. They are the same age and are currently spending time getting to know one another. Even you cannot be so cruel as to rip a child away from a sleepover with his friend." There was a challenge to his words then. Narcissa had made their point very clear, but Lucius had gone a step further. Insinuating that it would be Dumbledore, and not anyone else, that caused Harry harm by trying to remove him from their care now.

There was a long, and heavy, pause as the two men seemed to size one another up, though neither had moved even a fraction from where they stood. This was a battle that Dumbledore was coming to realize that he was not going to win. He had come ill-prepared for a fight, though he supposed that he should have been more ready for one. Whatever the reason that the Malfoys had chosen to protect Harry, he now understood how it was that Hagrid had been bested by them in the middle of the street.

They knew what they were doing, and they knew the cards that they were holding. Playing games with snakes never worked out, unless you knew that you could win. And Albus Dumbledore rarely played games that he was not sure that he could win. Drawing in a breath, he let his focus drift between the pair, unclear which he should be trying to persuade to see his side. "May I see Harry? I should like to introduce myself to him, with your permission, of course."

"No." Narcissa's answer was silent in her head to Lucius, though she did not so much as glance in his direction. *"I don't want him anywhere near the boys. Either of them."*

"Let's think about this though," Lucius had not been so quick on the refusal as his wife, *"if we control their first meeting, we can make sure that he is not trying to manipulate Harry in any way. If we wait and let*

him meet him when he goes to the school, we lose all aspect of control over the situation."

"Fine." She did not have to like it to know that he was right. "Very well, Headmaster." Narcissa spoke out loud once more. "I will go and get him, if you would please wait here with Lucius." The witch did not wait for a reply as she swept around the man and out of the room, headed back up the stairs towards the room that she had left the boys in before. Knowing that Draco would likely never remain behind, and that bringing Harry down would result in both boys being in the study with Albus Dumbledore. Something that she had been hoping, rather desperately, to avoid.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!